The Cool Kids by Beboppin' Betty

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Summary: Love or hate them. A third-party glimpse of the kids in high-school.

The Cool Kids

A/N: So I've had this image in my head since Season 2.

You know how sometimes in movies time slows down and some sexy, cool song starts playing when that really fabulous character shows up on screen? Well, just wait, because that's about to happen at our very own Hawkins High School. It's the same thing every day, and starts right around the time that familiar blue Camaro rumbles into the parking lot.

Yup. There it is now, right on schedule. They don't know they do it, but the crowd parts like the Red Sea as the car passes, heads turning to catch a glimpse. It's the same parking space every day, as if somehow there's been a silent consensus that it's reserved just for *them,* and no one dares violate the rule. Those guys, you know the ones, are hanging around in front, waiting. Doesn't matter that they're just standing around like everyone else, they manage to make it look effortlessly cool.

No one knows how it happened, but it did. They were the dorks who wore Ghostbusters costumes to school and played Dungeons & Dragons, and were always riding around town on their bikes on some secret mission. But nobody seems to remember that, or care. All of a sudden they're the guys everyone wants at their parties – especially after that weird Byers kid moved away.

The Camaro rolls to a stop, and now the show starts. It's right about now that the music would kick in. The doors creak open and *they* step out. They're *those* girls – universally loved and hated, but always noticed. Max Mayfield, the only girl around who can make tomboy look good. She's the one in ripped jeans and Ray Bans. You usually find her skateboarding during lunch, which only makes her that much cooler.

And then there's Jane Hopper, who everybody calls El but no one knows why. This week her long hair is in tousled curls and she's wearing a black mini skirt and combat boots and looks like Cindy fucking Crawford. Next week five other girls will show up with that

hair and those clothes, but El will have already moved on. She's never afraid to try some new style.

Between them, they could have any guy they wanted. Max usually has a new guy hanging around every couple of months, but they never last. El has eyes only for one: tall, arrogant Mike Wheeler. His appeal is baffling, but if El wasn't in the picture, there'd be more than one girl lining up for him. Somehow they find his smug sense of superiority coupled with intriguing good looks irresistible.

Everyone watches them, but they're oblivious. Mike slings his arm around El's shoulder and kisses her, and jealousy flares around them. Max sits on the hood of her car laughing at Lucas Sinclair. They dated, but he joined the football team back in sophomore year and has been with one of the cheerleaders since then.

Dustin Henderson pulls some weird contraption out of his bag and shows it off, and whatever it is has the rest of them rolling their eyes. He's a total science nerd and rumor has it he has early acceptance to M.I.T., but everyone loves him because he's a goof and can get anyone a fake I.D.

Oh, there's the bell. They set off in a pack and around them everyone gets close but not too close, all wanting a piece of them but never quite able to break through the barrier. After all, if you try too hard to be cool, you're not.

You'll never be them.